

In Step

A NEWSLETTER FOR ROLE MODELS



Stepping Stones encourages young people to consider a full range of career options. The examples you as role models provide will help ensure that Alberta has a diverse and well-trained workforce in the future.

The other side of the equation is providing students with learning materials that prepare them for tomorrow. A major component of this is a strong background in science and technology. After recognizing this need several years ago, the Alberta Government developed two new programs to be implemented in our schools this fall. The first is a new integrated science curriculum; the second is a fresh approach to the future of the workplace entitled Career and Technology Studies.

Education That Opens Doors

Our innovative science curriculum, which is attracting national attention, emphasizes the "big ideas" of science; for example, the concept of energy. The program addresses how science and technology are integrated in our society, and encourages young women and men to consider the wide range of career choices available in scientific and technical fields. Special emphasis is placed on "gender balance" in the teaching of science.

Students in grade 10 will be required to take a new full-year course, Science 10, replacing the half-year introductory courses of Biology 10, Chemistry 10, and Physics 10. They then will enter redesigned full-year courses in these three areas in grades 11 and 12. The new curriculum covers the individual subject areas as thoroughly as at present, and adds a further 125 hours of general science study to high school requirements.

Career and Technology Studies (CTS) provides an opportunity for students in grades 7 through 12 to build daily living skills, investigate career options, and prepare for entry into the workplace or higher education. CTS helps students to use technologies effectively and to work with others as they identify career opportunities and resolve problems. Enterprise and Innovation, the first CTS program, will be available to schools this fall.

An important feature of CTS is its flexible structure allowing schools, teachers and students to design programs that are relevant and which make effective use of community resources. The knowledge, skills and attitudes that students develop throughout the program will be recognized for credit toward their high school diploma, and in many cases, will meet the standards set by business and industry in their program area.

Alberta is taking great strides forward in education and Stepping Stones role models are right in step!

Elaine McCoy, Q.C.
Minister Responsible for
Women's Issues

► Inside Information

Work and Family:
The Corporate Response 2
Networks in Education 3

Work And Family: The Corporate Response

It's a familiar feeling to a working mother — not enough hours in a day. Women who want to succeed at work and at home often have few options in the race against the clock.

But for some, there is a helping hand — their employer's. A growing number of corporations in both private and public sectors are beginning to recognize that productivity suffers when an employee is coping with high levels of family stress. Furthermore, as more women enter the workplace and as labour shortages emerge due to a declining birth rate and an aging population, attracting and retaining skilled workers often means offering flexible programs that accommodate the multiple roles of employees.

In 1988 and 1989, the Conference Board of Canada surveyed 1,600 government and non-government organizations, with some 11,000 employees. It found that a variety of flexible employment schedules exist within Canadian corporations. Almost 49 per cent of the surveyed companies offered flex-time to their workers and about 28 per cent of companies offered compressed work weeks. Over

half permitted part-time employment, although only half of those did so with pro-rated benefits. Nineteen per cent had job-sharing arrangements, and about 10 per cent of those employees to work at home. Other benefits noted in the 1989 report *The Corporate Response to Workers with Family Responsibilities* were "child care information and referral services (8.4%), assistance for the care of sick children (7.8%), child care centres (4.8%), and parent education seminars (4.6%)."

How do Alberta companies fare? A glimpse into provincial corporations shows that there are several companies taking an innovative and open approach to the issue of work-family balance.

Rob Morin, manager of employee relations for Phillips Petroleum Resources Ltd. of Calgary, describes his company's experience. In 1991, one of his employee relations supervisors, Nancy Desroches, approached him with a job-sharing proposal. She and a partner, Karen McCarthy, would share her job and benefits, each working 2 1/2 days a week. Morin, who was personally supportive, talked

to his counterparts at Gulf Canada Resources Ltd., which had accepted a similar proposal in 1990, and convinced the U.S. parent company to go with it. The result: employees that "make every minute count."

Another company that has embraced alternative work schedules is Dow Chemical in Fort Saskatchewan. According to University Recruitment Coordinator Linda O'Reilly, Dow began to offer job-sharing and part time employment to its workers two years ago "to make sure we don't lose experienced people." Currently, they have three administrative support positions shared by six people and three part-time engineers, all women. O'Reilly greets the program with enthusiasm.

That enthusiasm was also demonstrated by Cheryl Way, director of human resources at Edmonton's Westin Hotel, when approached with a job-sharing proposal by convention services manager Laura Gadowsky when her maternity leave expired last year. Laura and her partner, Jaie Phillips, each work three days a week, providing a full day's overlap to address the Hotel's concerns regarding client information. The partners keep each other informed and maintain flexible schedules. Their overlapping day varies with the conventions that come in.

Another growing phenomenon is on-site day care. The first on-site day care in Alberta opened at the University of Alberta Hospital day care in 1965 for hospital employees, university students, and the general public with children aged 2 and over. Since then, several other hospitals in Alberta have developed on-site day care, including Holy Cross Hospital in Calgary, Calgary General Hospital, Bethany Care Centre, and the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Grande Prairie.

One of the most comprehensive of such centres is the Alberta Children's Hospital/Knob Hill Day Care in Calgary. Opened in 1985, it offers full-time, part-time, drop-in, before- and after-school, and summer holiday care to ACH employees and members of



We Were There *Stepping Stones Provincial Coordinator Janice White operates our program booth at the Calgary Teachers' Convention, distributing teaching materials and conducting information sessions. Over 25,000 teachers attended such conventions across Alberta during February and March, creating excellent opportunities to promote the Stepping Stones program. Convention-goers responded positively and supportively.*

the Knob Hill community on a non-profit basis. Although independent of the Hospital, ACH's director of finance is a day care board member, and the involvement of the hospital is considered crucial.

Canada Place Day Care Society in Edmonton is another non-profit centre, established by the federal government for its employees. According to Melba Hamelin, acting Assistant Director, federal employees were polled and on-site day care was a benefit widely desired. The federal government provided the capital, and in November 1988, the day care began operations. Eighty percent of its spaces are reserved for federal employees. Hamelin indicates that not only are employees close to their children, but the downtown location enables the centre to offer a wider range of programs to the children in their care.

In the private sector, the media has taken a leading role. Both the *Calgary Herald* and the *Edmonton Journal* offer on-site day care to their employees. The *Journal's* Tiny Types Day Care was the city's first work-place day care designed exclusively for its employees. It is also unique in the level of support received from the employer: the day care was incorporated in the design for the new *Journal* building, replacing a planned auditorium, and its daily operations are heavily subsidized by the newspaper. As Paula Olmstead of the Human Resources Department explains, the day care is aiming for higher than usual standards. All staff have a minimum 2 years community college training or equivalent.

What is the future of corporations in the work-family balance? As the Conference Board of Canada concluded, "the demographic profile of Canada is changing . . . To remain competitive, organizations need to acknowledge these changes. The implementation of family-related benefits is one way to do this." And, as Rob Morin of Phillips Petroleum Resources Ltd. states, "with the number of working moms and the number of early retirees" ideas like job-sharing are "a subject whose time is going to come."

Science Networks In Education

How do we encourage students, especially girls, to choose scientific careers? By making science interesting, by presenting it in a new and intriguing light. This is a major, and often daunting, task for educators.

But the job is getting easier, thanks to the Science Alberta Foundation. In its efforts to promote science, the Calgary-based organization has begun a provincial science network and has provided initial funding to some unique programs for school aged children.

One of these is the Science Hotline. Calgary Science Hotline Coordinator Janis Webb describes it as a tool to "increase students' and teachers' awareness of science." Operational since September, the Hotline answers a wide range of scientific inquiries from teachers — anything from specific questions regarding science problems to requests for guest speakers. The Hotline maintains a registry of about 200 local volunteers from the scientific community that it matches with incoming inquiries. The registry includes women scientists and others interested in addressing the concerns of women in science.

Increasing scientific and technological competency is the goal enthusiastically supported by Michael Caley, Coordinator of the soon-to-open Edmonton Science Hotline. Caley hopes to develop a fast and efficient system for teachers to obtain basic scientific information, set up speakers, assist in curriculum development, provide field trip ideas, and help in career day planning. One of the more exciting projects is the development of a "shadow partner" project, where teachers would actually spend time in a workplace with a scientist and get "some hands-on, personal experience they could then take back to the classroom."

Going one step further is Calgary's Operation Minerva. As director Joyce Luethy explains, girls in the elementary grades have a high degree of interest in science. But something happens in junior high, where this

interest declines sharply. Operation Minerva intervenes at this level "to encourage girls to go into careers that require math and science majors . . . before they make choices at the high school level" that could close doors later on.

Now in its third year, Operation Minerva matches Grade 8 girls with role models in non-traditional jobs. As part of an annual two-day conference, the students spend a morning at the workplace with a role model, learning about the occupation, the skills it requires, and its pluses and minuses. The next day is spent at various workshops on non-traditional careers. Approximately 200 "mentors" are registered with Operation Minerva, and the conference attracts 120 girls each year.

This year's conference, May 22-23 at the Calgary Board of Education, has a dual function. One part will involve Calgary students; the other will involve about 50 women from the Calgary region who will learn how to be mentors and how to run a conference. The work of Women In Science Developing Operation Minerva (WISDOM), the added conference is an effort to expand the scope of the program.

The success of Operation Minerva has them looking beyond the borders of Calgary. According to Luethy, they are currently working with Science Alberta to bring the program to six more communities in the province, including Pincher Creek, Athabasca, and Fort McMurray.

All these programs provide a realistic, concrete link between the world of science and the world of school. Science Alberta hopes this approach will inspire interest in students, generate greater innovation in science education, and ultimately attract more people into scientific fields.

The Balancing Act

Part Two

Leslie Young is an Engineer with Esso Resources, and the mother of two young boys. She talks about the difficulty she experienced adjusting to motherhood after the birth of her first son. "I had the worst case of baby brain and then I realized getting back (to work) was what I needed."

However, she agonized over child care. She decided on a live-in nanny.

"I read books on hiring nannies and decided to do it myself." Leslie interviewed a half-a-dozen candidates and she says made an inappropriate first choice. The nanny left the last Friday before Leslie's maternity leave ended, leaving her scrambling to find a day care within hours. She eventually went to a nanny agency and found a nanny who stayed with them for two and a half years.

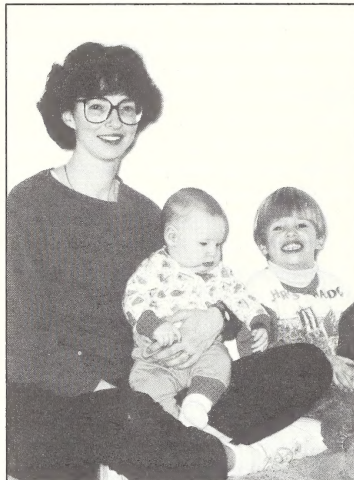
Esso, she says, has been a very supportive employer in helping workers balance family and work responsibilities. When she returned to work, her son was six months old, yet she was able to continue breast feeding him by expressing milk at work. The Health Centre at Esso stored the breast milk for nursing mothers.

Leslie says at first she became jealous of her nanny. "I was concerned my son wouldn't love me any more after being with her all day." She adds that it didn't take him long to realize who mommy was and that she would have been more concerned if he wasn't loved by the nanny.

Since the birth of her second son, Leslie is considering one of the many flexible arrangements Esso offers. "I would like to work part-time," working fewer days in the week.

For her, one of the down sides of being a working mother is travel. "I promised myself (after the birth of her first child) that I would only be gone one night at a time until he reached a year and a half."

When asked if she could change one thing to help her better balance work and family she says "a strong



Leslie Young and sons Michael, 4 1/2 months, and Andrew, 3 1/2 years

support network of friends and family." She adds, "I know having a nanny is a luxury for us. It gives us piece of mind and a quality of life." Mornings are not spent in rushing everyone out the door. For Leslie, time with her family is most important. "On the weekends I don't want to be choosing between vacuuming and the zoo. Keeping a spotless house isn't as important as it used to be."

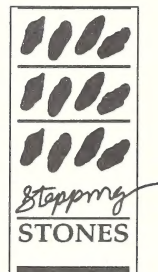
Charlaine Pare's matter-of-fact approach to life is inspirational. She is a biomedical technologist at the University of Alberta Hospital and a single parent of three children now ages 17, 14 and 10. At the age of 28 she returned to school — high school, full-time for two years. "I knew I had no education and if I didn't go back to school I would be working for minimum wage or would be on welfare."

After completing high school, she went on to study at British Columbia Institute of Technology. Those years were not easy, however, she says, "School was rough, but I had my kids behind me. If I wanted to provide for them, this is what I had to do."

Balancing work and family is

especially difficult for a single parent. Sometimes Charlaine's kids have to get to basketball practice on their own; sometimes she spends all day Sunday (the day of rest!) cooking for the following week. Her children do their own laundry and Charlaine is proud that they are very independent. As far as keeping the house tidy, she says her children's bedroom doors get closed a lot.

The biggest problem for a single parent, says Charlaine, is constant fatigue. There's never anybody else to pick up the slack when she's sick, or just plain fed up. But the gratification she gets from an interesting job makes the years of effort worthwhile: "I like being a working parent. I look at women who are single and still looking for someone to support them. Their self-esteem seems so low. I find that awful."



InStep is published for Stepping Stones Role Models by the Alberta Women's Secretariat
8th Floor, Kensington Place
10011 - 109 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3S8
(403) 422-4927

We invite your comments, suggestions and story ideas.

Alberta

WOMEN'S SECRETARIAT